GREENHOUSE AND GARDENS



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Language and Literacy

Hidden Letters: Themed Alphabet

EZ.010.LA.1001-1002

Activity Type:
Free Choice

Objective:
Students will identify uppercase and lowercase letters.
Students will create sight words.

Each themed classroom includes a magnetic alphabet. A featured activity will be included with each themed magnetic alphabet. Students develop fine motor skills and practice letter recognition by finding magnetic letters in themed sensory materials such as faux soil and faux grass. Taking turns grasping a hidden letter with jumbo tweezers encourages students to refine the pincher grasp.

WHAT TO DO

Add faux soil or faux grass to the containers, roughly ¾ container full. Add the magnetic letters and mix among the sensory material. Encourage students to find letters in the containers using the jumbo tweezers. Students can match letters to word bank word cards, create words using inventive spelling, or match to the themed magnetic letters.

PLAY TIPS

- Make word cards on sentence strips and ask students to find the letters in the faux soil or faux grass.
- Write out word bank words on sentence strips, leaving one letter out. Have students “find” the missing letter in the container.

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Mathematics

Spot the Number Boards: Number Cards

EZ.010.LA.1003-1004

Activity Type:
Small Group and Free Choice

Objectives:
Students will recognize numbers 1-10.

Each themed classroom includes themed number cards. A featured activity will be included with each set of themed number cards. Students use activity boards to practice recognizing and writing numbers in different formats and situations. Number recognition is when a child learns how to identify different numbers by their names, by the way they look, and by matching them to their representative quantities. Quickly recognizing numbers aids students in grasping fundamental math concepts and boosts their confidence in math exercises and activities.

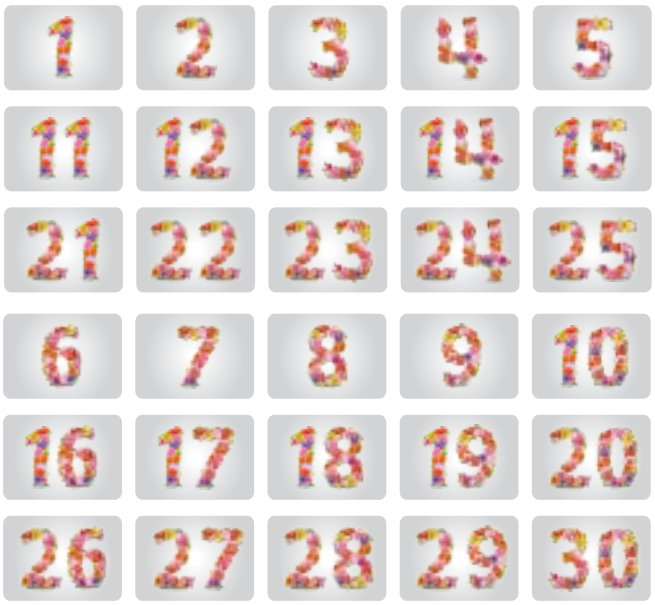
WHAT TO DO

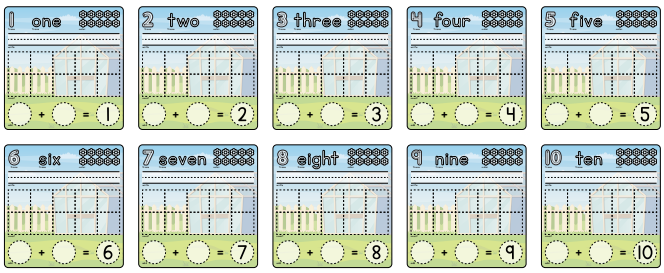
Introduce the number boards and show students the various representations of numbers (numeral, number of objects, one-to-one correspondence). Pass out the number boards and buttons. Using the themed number cards, call out a number and ask students to find all representations on their board. Students can cover the representation with a button.

PLAY TIPS

- Use dice to rather than number cards to identify a number. Have students roll the dice and find the correlating numbers on the board.
- Ask students to put the number boards in order, from lowest number to greatest.

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Mathematics

Counting and Measurement

EZ.010.LA.1005

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will count items up to 10 with one-to-one correspondence.
Students will begin to add to and take away items.
Students will begin to use nonstandard measurement tools.

Students use counting manipulatives, non-standard forms of measurement like Unifix Cubes, and themed counters, to practice one-to-one correspondence and early practices of measurement using themed math cards. Measurement can be an abstract concept for young children. Manipulatives like blocks, cubes, or cups provide a tangible way to understand concepts like length, and height. By physically comparing and ordering objects, they can build a foundation for understanding measurement units later.

WHAT TO DO

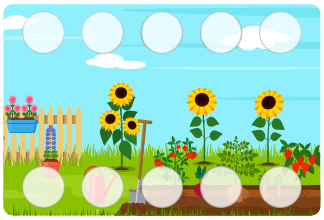
After modeling how to use the mats, place the counting and measurement mats in a learning center as a teacher-directed or student-directed experience. As a teacher-directed experience, guide students to use manipulatives to show one-to-one correspondence and length. As a student-directed experience, allow students to freely explore the manipulatives and mats.

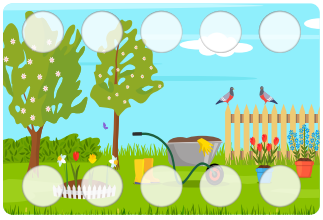
PLAY TIPS

- Use the math manipulatives to reinforce sorting by color and type. Encourage students to count how many are in each category. Encourage students to think of other ways to sort the manipulatives.
- Ask students to use the manipulatives to create patterns. Create simple pattern mats (ABAB, AABB, ABB) for additional support and guidance.

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Mathematics

Making Patterns

EZ.010.LA.1006

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will recognize common 2-D shapes.
Students will sort by features and attributes.
Students will recognize patterns.

Students explore patterns and properties of shapes as they create whole images using pattern blocks and themed pattern block mats. Pattern blocks boost students' ability to think critically, make predictions, and test their predictions.

WHAT TO DO

Pattern block mats and pattern blocks work well as a self-directed activity. The intuitive nature requires little direction. Place the mats and pattern blocks out for students to explore freely, encouraging students to match the pattern block shape and color to the correlating space on the whole image.

PLAY TIPS

- You can make your own pattern block cards by simply tracing pattern blocks on paper. Create a design using the pattern blocks and place the design on paper. Trace around the outer edge of your design and allow students to fill in the design with pattern blocks.
- Have students take a two-handed scoop of pattern blocks and sort by shape or color. Use graphing paper or a graphing mat to visualize the sorting process.
- Students can use mirrors to create patterns and make observations in the reflections. Ask students to describe what they are seeing as they create patterns in the mirrors.

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Language and Literacy

Pre-Writing Line Tracing

EZ.010.LA.1007

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will build pre-writing skills by tracing curved, notched, and zigzag lines. Students will recognize directionality in print and writing.

Students work on emergent literacy and transition to letter formations by tracing lines, patterns, and shapes with a theme in a dry erase, reusable format. To connect to fine motor development, students are encouraged to add detail. Themed templates are included for tracing.

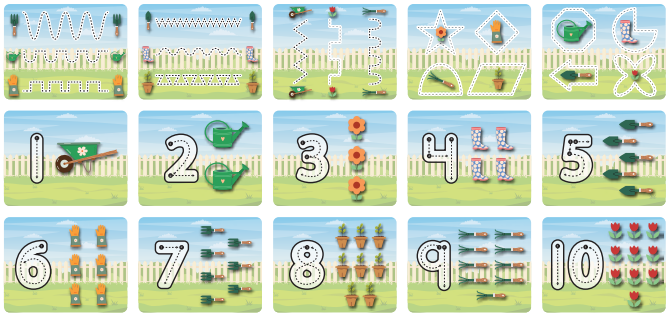
WHAT TO DO

1. Place the dry erase templates in the writing center. Students have the choice to use dry erase markers on the dry erase templates or place paper on the template and trace using a pencil/crayon. Remind students to start from left to right and top to bottom.
2. Encourage students to make their own tracing templates using the dry erase templates as a guide. Students can work on tracing shapes, lines, and numbers by repetitively tracing the same shape, line, or number using a different color crayon each time.

PLAY TIPS

- Include the themed tracing patterns in the writing center to align with other free-choice writing exercises. Using a clipboard will help students control the writing utensil.
- Tape the template vertically, on an easel or teacher board, to encourage the strengthening of fine motor development.

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Language and Literacy

Syllable Awareness

EZ.010.LA.1009

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will understand and use recognizable and new vocabulary.
Students will begin to blend and segment syllables in words.

Phonological awareness is the ability to recognize and manipulate the sounds of spoken language. It is an essential skill in the process of learning to read and write. Young children participate in various sound activities to build sound awareness. Recognizing that words can be broken down into syllables or units of sound is a phonological skill.

WHAT TO DO

Introduce the vocabulary cards as a guided activity or free choice center activity. Have students clap the number of beats on the vocabulary card and indicate the number by moving the clip.

PLAY TIPS

- Provide simple instruments to reinforce the number of syllables. Rather than clap the number of syllables in a word, students can shake the number of syllables.
- Students can use their body to emphasize syllables in a word. Have students jump up and down, tap their toes, march in place, do jumping jacks, or tap their head to count syllables.

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Language and Literacy

Rhyming Awareness

EZ.010.LA.1010

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will understand and use recognizable and new vocabulary.
Students will begin to recognize rhyming words.

Phonological awareness is the ability to recognize and manipulate the sounds of spoken language. It is an essential skill in the process of learning to read and write. Young children participate in various sound activities to build sound awareness. Rhyming activities help children listen for ending sounds in words, a precursor to phonics activities in late preschool.

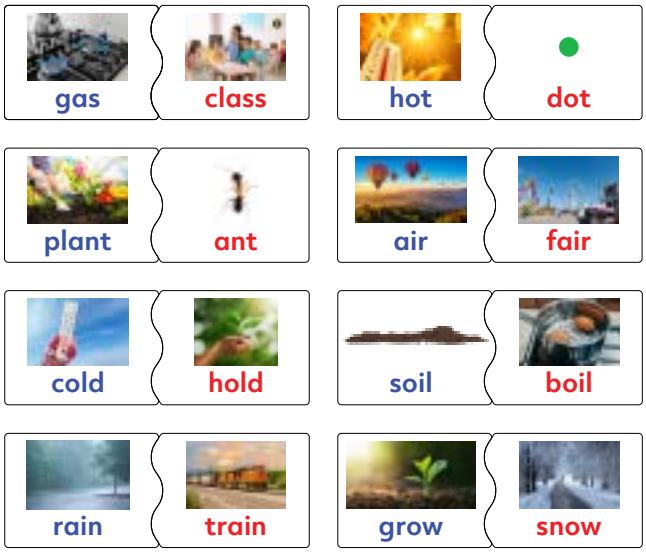
WHAT TO DO

Introduce the rhyming cards as a small group or free choice activity. Say the words on the cards together and help students to identify the rhyming pairs. Students can connect the rhyming pairs by placing the cards side by side on the table.

PLAY TIPS

- Play rhyming words with body parts. Have students touch their head, nose, arm, etc. and think of a word that rhymes with the body part.
- Play, *I Spy with My Little Eye*, using target items in the classroom. For example, decide on something in the classroom, like *door* as the target word. Then state, "I spy with my little eye something that rhymes with *floor*." The students look around the classroom for something that rhymes with floor.

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Language and Literacy

Onset and Rime Awareness

EZ.010.LA.1011

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will understand and use recognizable and new vocabulary.
Students will begin to identify and segment one-syllable words.

Phonological awareness is the ability to recognize and manipulate the sounds of spoken language. It is an essential skill in the process of learning to read and write. Young children participate in various sound activities to build sound awareness. Onset and rime activities help children identify patterns in words.

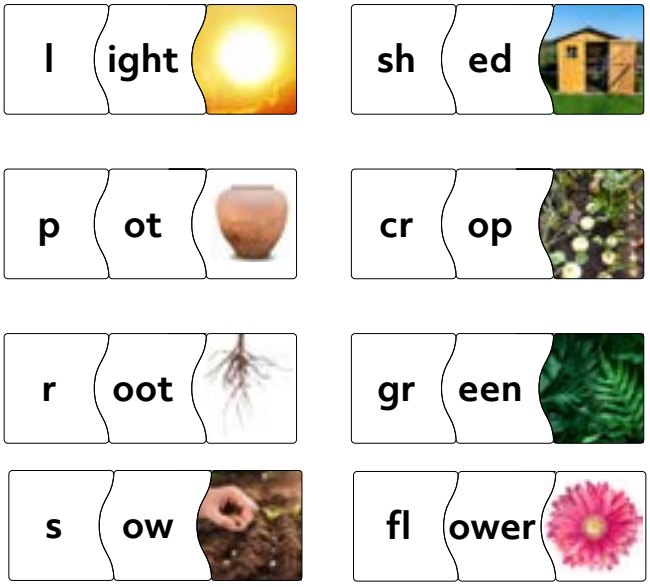
WHAT TO DO

Introduce the picture puzzles as a small group or free choice activity. As a small group exercise, model saying the onset together, the rime together, and the picture that identifies the word. As a free choice exercise, have the students put the pieces together to create a word.

PLAY TIP

Attach beginning and ending sounds to a set (2) of large dice. Have students roll the dice and say the word created, putting the onset and rime together.

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Language and Literacy

I Spy Word Bank Words: Word Bank Words

EZ.010.LA.1012

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will identify uppercase and lowercase letters.
Students will distinguish elements of print.

Each themed classroom includes a word bank. A featured activity will be included with each themed word bank. Students increase word bank word recognition and fluency by actively seeking words in the classroom. Greenhouse themed words are placed around the classroom; students search for the words using a dry erase chart and clipboard.

WHAT TO DO

Pass out the word bank spy cards to a small group or place in a center for free exploration. Students can use a clipboard to hold onto the word bank spy cards. Hide the searchable word bank cards or designate a student to hide the cards around the classroom. Encourage the remaining students to "find" the cards using a magnifying glass and mark an "X" when the card has been found.

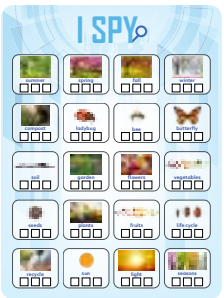
PLAY TIPS

- Ask students to match the searchable word bank cards to the word bank cards in the writing center (cards on a ring).
- Have students create their own searchable word bank cards with pictures that depict the word.

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Language and Literacy

Pollination Demonstration

EZ.010.LA.1013

Activity Type:
Small Group

Objectives:
Students will identify new terms and apply information.
Students will understand that pollination is a process.

Pollination is the process that allows plants to reproduce. Simple classroom demonstrations can help young students understand this process. Using a large labeled diagram of a flower, educator can point out parts of a flower asking for students to repeat new terms. A follow-up demonstration using chalk and cotton balls can reinforce the terms and clarify the abstract process. Sequencing activities promote language development. Children learn and practice vocabulary related to order, such as "first," "next," "then," "last," and "after."

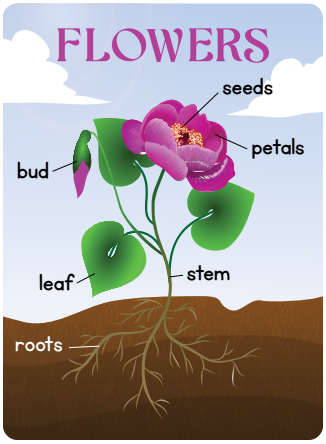
WHAT TO DO

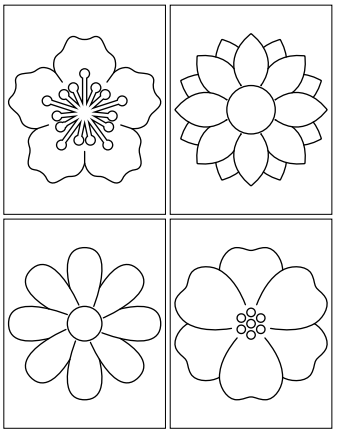
1. After reading *Animal Pollinators* by Jennifer Boothroyd, review the animals and insects that can serve as pollinators. Using a labeled diagram of a flower, point to the parts and explain their functions. Ask students to repeat the terms: flower, petals, leaves, stem, and roots.
2. Have students color their individual flower using markers or crayons. Ask students to color the center of the flower with a piece of chalk. After students are done coloring, have them place their flowers around the classroom. Using a cotton ball (bee), stop by each flower and rub the cotton ball in the center of the flower. What do you notice about your cotton ball? The chalk (pollen) transferred from the flower onto the bee.

PLAY TIPS

- Turn the "bee" (cotton ball) into a visual replica by adding construction paper wings and antennae.
- Use other materials to serve as pollinators and pollen, such as: pipe cleaners, straws, tape, clothes pins, and felt (pollinators), and glitter, baby powder, and crushed Cheerios (pollen).

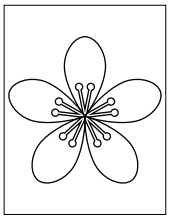
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Mathematics

Seed and Bean Sort

EZ.010.LA.1014

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will make observations and compare/contrast beans and seeds.
Students will create patterns.

Young children have a natural desire to sort and classify as they make sense of the world around them. Using real seeds and beans and sorting boards that provide direction, students sort and organize in many ways. As an extension, students can consider other ways to sort and organize that are relevant to them.

WHAT TO DO

1. Distribute a handful of beans/seeds and a paper plate or paper towel to the students. Invite students to sort their objects in any way they would like initially: by size, kind, color, shape, etc. As students are sorting, ask them how they are sorting.
2. Distribute the sorting mats and encourage students to use the categories on the mats to sort.

PLAY TIPS

- Soak the beans and seeds in water overnight and dissect them the next day. Students can make comparisons between a dry bean/seed and a wet bean/seed.
- Talk about the different ways a seed can travel: by wind, water, animals, and even on the bottom of your shoe! The Tiny Seed by Eric Carle is a great story to read about the travel path of a seed.

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Science

Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter

EZ.010.LA.1015

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will sort items that are the same and different into groups.

Seasons look different depending on where you live. Some areas of the world experience significant weather changes per season. After reading non-fiction and fiction books about seasons, students can participate in sorting activities that help them understand relevant clothing and gardening activities associated with seasons.

WHAT TO DO

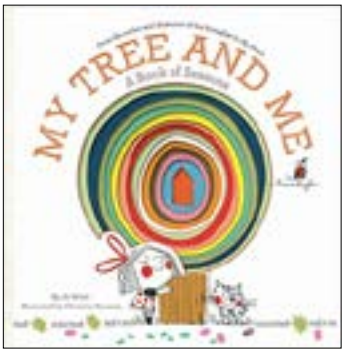
1. Ask the students what they know about seasons. Questions like, “What are the four seasons?,” How is the weather during each season?,” and “What foods do you eat in each season?” help students activate background knowledge. Read nonfiction and fiction books about seasons to spark curiosity and encourage students to ask questions. Be sure to talk about the different kinds of weather we can experience in each season.
2. Place the season sorting mats and pictures to sort in a center. Students can match picture cards with the appropriate season and discuss their reasoning with each other.

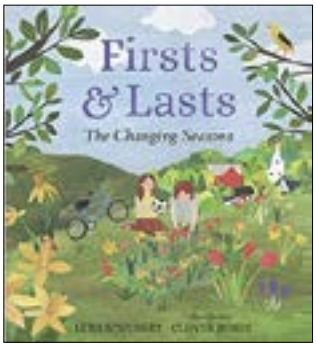
PLAY TIPS

- Make a classroom chart about seasons, divided into 4 quadrants. Have students draw activities, foods they might eat, or clothes they might wear in each season quadrant.
- Create a seasonal gardening chart; include pictures of fruits and vegetables you would harvest in each season.

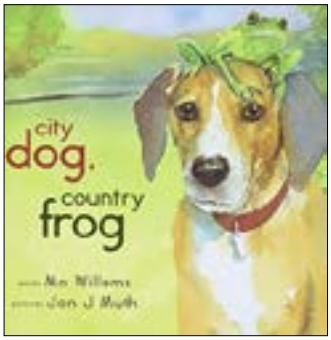
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Science

Ladybug Life Cycle

EZ.010.LA.1016

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will make connections between life cycles and understanding that all living things grow and change.

In the classroom, students observe the growth and development of spotted ladybugs, beginning as eggs and passing through the stages of larva, pupa, young adult, and adult ladybugs. Students can use magnifying glasses to explore details and enhance discoveries by manipulating acrylic life cycle figurines. Developmentally appropriate journals provide students with the opportunity to record their observations. Sequencing is a fundamental skill for reading comprehension and storytelling. (Include ladybug habitat)

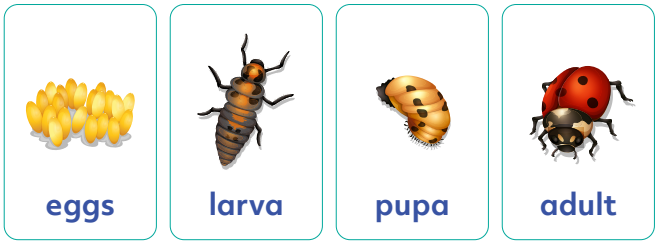
WHAT TO DO

1. You can introduce the concept of a life cycle by reading books about the life cycle of a ladybug like, The Life Cycle of a Ladybug by Colleen Sexton and A Ladybug's Life by John Himmelman . Explain that a life cycle is the change that happens to a living creature over its lifetime. What changes happen to the ladybug from the start of an egg?
2. The life cycle sequencing kit and life cycle sequencing cards work well as a center-based activity. You can ask students guiding questions as they are exploring the materials. Ask guiding questions such as: "How would you put the ladybug in order by change?," "Describe how the ladybug changes?," and "How have you changed since you were born?"
3. Create a ladybug habitat to encourage student observations. Be sure to include sticks/branches, plant stems with aphids, and apple segments/raisins. Misting the habitat daily ensures the ladybugs have enough water.

PLAY TIPS

- Ask students to create the life cycle of a ladybug using Play-Doh. Use the life cycle sequencing cards as guides.
- If you choose to include live larvae or adult ladybugs in your classroom, be sure to prepare all of their needs (see step 3). Live larvae travel best between 55-85 degrees Fahrenheit. Larvae can be purchased at Insect Lore.

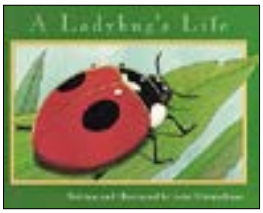
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Fine Arts

Seed and Bean Mosaics

EZ.010.LA.1017

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will experiment with unique art materials.
Students will participate in sensory-rich activities and experiences.

Students use dried beans and seeds to create animal mosaics. Mosaic boards and a variety of bean and seed shapes, sizes, and colors are available for free exploration. Picking up small beans and seeds, manipulating them, and placing them precisely requires strong hand-eye coordination and precise finger movements, which contribute to the development of fine motor skills. Additionally, mosaics are open-ended activities that enhance creativity and imagination.

WHAT TO DO

1. Mosaics were created in ancient times and made of tiny colored pieces of stone, pottery, glass, or other materials arranged together to make a pattern or image. Students can make a simulated mosaic using a template and beans/seeds. In a center-based learning area of the classroom, provide students with the mosaic templates and assortment of beans/seeds. Students can use glue to adhere beans/seeds in patterns and/or shapes. Educator can make an example to leave out as inspiration.
2. As an extension, students can make their own mosaic boards out of paper or cardboard. They can use stencils or Farm to Table magnets to trace an outline and fill in the template with beans/seeds.

PLAY TIPS

- Pre-paint your beans/seeds with tempera paint and allow to dry. Students can use the additional colors to enhance mosaic templates or make new patterns and/or shapes.
- Create a bean/seed classroom mural to be displayed. Draw templates on butcher paper and ask students to fill in the templates over a period of time.

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Fine Arts

Play-Doh Worms

EZ.010.LA.1018

Activity Type:
Free Choice

Objectives:
Students will build small muscle skills while recognizing numbers 0-9.

Exploring Play-Doh increases fine motor strength and skills. Students squish, roll, sculpt, and mold Play-Doh to create worms to match the number of worms on an activity mat. As students are strengthening the small muscles in their fingers, they are making one-to-one associations.

WHAT TO DO

The worm mats and Play-Doh can be used in a center-based learning area. Introduce the materials, asking students to manipulate Play-Doh worms to match the corresponding worm mat. Encourage students to make shorter and longer worms, discussing the size difference between the worms.

PLAY TIPS

- Use the Play-Doh in dramatic play! Children can manipulate Play-Doh to create mud, grass, water, and structures for the farm animals.
- Create additional Play-Doh mats using farm-themed backdrops printed on cardstock or laminated paper. Encourage children to design farm animals out of Play-Doh.
- To focus on one-to-one associations rather than fine motor development, use pipe cleaners or yarn as worms.

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Science

Hydroponics: Where Does Food Come From?

EZ.010.LA.1019

Activity Type:
Large Group and Routines

Objectives:
Students will observe plant growth over a period of time.
Students will understand plant needs.

Agriculture conversations and activities in the preschool classroom help shape positive attitudes toward food that lead to healthy eating decisions in the future. When young children learn about hydroponics and the history behind growing food, they can apply their understanding to hydroponic observations and activity opportunities in the classroom. Students participate in an observation walk and share as part of the daily classroom routine.

WHAT TO DO

1. Ask students to think about all the different things plants need to grow. Record on chart paper. Is soil one of those needs? Explain that hydroponics (big word!) is growing plants in water. Water gives plants all the nutrients they need to grow.
2. Do a gallery walk of the classroom hydroponics system (walk and talk). Ask students, "What do you notice?" Point out specific details of the system to students. After setting up the hydroponics system for growth, continue daily gallery walks and simple journaling. Students can keep track of daily and weekly changes and help you monitor pH levels.

PLAY TIPS

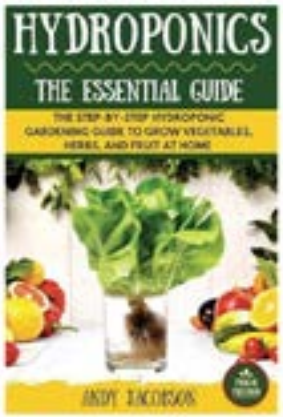
- Familiarize yourself with the process of hydroponics. Several resources include: *Hydroponics: The Essential Hydroponics Guide* by Andy Jacobson (provided), National Agricultural Library, and National Park Service.
- Experiment with other root supporters like Rockwool or cotton balls and compare plant growth. What do you notice about growth rate, plant size, and plant appearance between plants growth with different root supporters?

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Science

Translucent, Transparent, and Opaque

EZ.010.LA.1020

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will use their senses to explore properties and characteristics of objects.

A greenhouse protects out-of-season plants from extreme heat or cold and relies partly on the sun's rays for heat and light. The glass or plastic structure must be translucent to let sunlight in. Students learn about translucent, transparent, and opaque and the effects of light on a variety of materials by guided exploring with flashlights and everyday translucent, transparent, and opaque objects. Experimenting with the materials allows students to make predictions, observe results, and ask questions. Through this play, they gain a deeper understanding of scientific concepts.

WHAT TO DO

1. Tell students they will be going on a light source scavenger hunt today. Ask students to look around the classroom (and even outside of the classroom) for sources of light. Ask students the following questions: "What light sources did you find?," "What does the light source provide for us?," and "Why do we need light?"
2. Tell students that light is able to pass through some objects but is blocked by others. Hold a flashlight up to an object and ask students to predict if they will be able to see the light shining through the item. Allow students to continue experimenting with the light tablet, flashlights, and objects, asking if they can see light shining through each item.

PLAY TIPS

- Record or allow students to record their predictions for each item on a chart. Model the experience before including as a center or free choice activity.
- Use the terms transparent (light shining through), translucent (some light shining through), and opaque (no light shining through) as students become more familiar with the concepts.

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Science

Growing a Garden

EZ.010.LA.1021

Activity Type:
Large Group and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will predict, observe, and make comparisons about plant life cycles.
Students will build new vocabulary words.

Growing a classroom garden is a community effort and includes participation from the entire class! After reading *The Tiny Seed* by Eric Carle and *The Carrot Seed* by Ruth Krauss, the class will record what is needed to transform a seed into a plant on chart paper using sequencing cards. The students can grow individual plants, a classroom plant, or small group plants, recording observations as the seeds transform. Growing a garden can help young children learn about patience and responsibility. This project takes time and effort and can give students a sense of accomplishment when they see the results of their hard work.

WHAT TO DO

1. Read *The Tiny Seed* by Eric Carle and *The Carrot Seed* by Ruth Krauss, comparing and contrasting the two books and discussing what a seed does. You can record new vocabulary words on chart paper to be displayed.
2. Give students a starter container and ask them to fill the container halfway with potting soil. Place the seeds in the center of the cup and cover the seeds with soil. Add a small amount of water and leave the containers in a location that receives considerable sunlight. Consider the seed packet directions and water accordingly each day.

PLAY TIP

Ask students to “record” their daily observations of the seed. Students can make comparisons to the daily observations of the hydroponic plants. Are the changes between the plants the same? Are the changes different? Measure the growth using non-standard and standard measuring tools.

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Fine Arts

At the Flower Shop

EZ.010.LA.1022

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will participate in dramatic expression and apply to real life situations and scenarios.

Starting a greenhouse can benefit the environment and provide a job opportunity! A dramatic play flower shop is a unique chance for students to take on various roles such as florist, designer, and customer. Through creative play, students can serve customers, create signage, design bouquets, and discover ways to run a successful flower shop. Role-playing provides a fun and engaging way to practice real-life situations in a safe and controlled environment.

WHAT TO DO

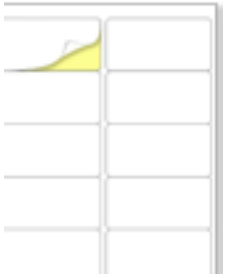
1. Set up the materials in the Garden Shed to inspire creative play. Students can role play the cashier-customer relationship, create unique floral arrangements, and better understand the responsibilities in plant caretaking.
2. Add writing materials like paper, labels, pencils, crayons, and markers to inspire students to design signs and labels. Independent pre-writing helps students start to build confidence and vocabulary.

PLAY TIPS

- Add real flowers and encourage students to observe and draw representations. As the flowers dry, students can sort the petals, stems, leaves, and buds and discuss parts of the flower.
- Students can “plant” the flowers, using Play-Doh or clay as a base.

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Mathematics

Garden Gumbo

EZ.010.LA.1023

Activity Type:
Small Group

Objectives:
Students will practice listening and responding to directions.
Students will identify numbers quantities, and images.

In this cooking center, students take on the role of chefs preparing a variety of simple dishes. Using recipe cards with pictures and numbers, they gather themed ingredients and add the correct amounts to their pot or bowl. As they scoop, count, and mix, children practice number recognition, matching quantities, and following step-by-step directions. This activity blends dramatic play, sensory exploration, and early math skills into a flexible, collaborative cooking experience that can be adapted to any classroom theme.

WHAT TO DO

1. Ask students to dress up as chefs using aprons and chef hats, then choose a stew recipe card that shows the ingredients and how many to add. Using scoops or their hands, have students count out the ingredients and place them into the pot or bowl.
2. Once the stew is finished, students can pretend to cook, stir, and serve it. After making their stew, they invite a friend to sing a stew song or pretend to serve their creation.

PLAY TIPS

- **Create a New Recipe:** Students design their own stew recipe card by choosing ingredients and deciding how many to add.
- **Chef Teamwork:** One student reads or shows the recipe while another chef gathers and counts the ingredients.
- **Taste Test Station:** Students present their stew to classmates who count the ingredients together before “tasting.”

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